

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

EYES ONLY

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DE WTE 0751 0911140

O 011135Z APR 71
FM WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM
TO GENERAL HAIG FOR DR KISSINGER
ZEM

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~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EYES ONLY WH10286~~

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DELIVER IN SEALED EYES ONLY ENVELOPE

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~ 011030Z APR 71 VIA CAS CHANNELS

FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER, SAIGON 0920
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER
REF: WHS1028 AND SCWH90155

1. THE MY LAI CASE NEVER AROUSED THE DEGREE OF INTEREST, EMOTION OR CONCERN IN VIETNAM THAT IT GENERATED IN THE UNITED STATES. TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE, THE GENERAL FEELING WAS THAT THE OCCURENCE WAS REGRETTABLE, BUT THAT IT WAS THE KIND OF THING WHICH OCCASIONALLY HAPPENED IN WAR. THE FACT THAT WE CARRIED OUT A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT AND BROUGHT TO TRIAL THOSE HELD RESPONSIBLE AROUSED SOME EXPRESSIONS OF APPROVAL. SELF-CRITICISM, A DESIRE TO SEE JUSTICE DONE AND A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT BLAME WERE LOOKED UPON AS VIRTUES.

2. MY FEELING IS, HOWEVER, THAT A COMMUTATION THROUGH REDUCTION OF THE SENTENCE BY THE PRESIDENT WOULD NOT ON BALANCE HAVE UNFAVORABLE EFFECTS HERE. THE MILITARY, I THINK, WILL CONSIDER A SENTENCE OF LIFE IMPRISONMENT EXCESSIVE. I BELIEVE THERE IS ALSO A FEELING THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY LAI IS NOT CALLEY'S ALONE AND THAT IF THERE IS GUILT IT IS MORE WIDELY SHARED. THERE ARE PROBABLY ELEMENTS AMONG THE OPPOSITION, SUCH AS DISSIDENT STUDENTS AND OTHER FACTIONS, WHO WILL CRITICIZE A COMMUTATION. THE VIET CONG WILL ENDEAVOR TO STIMULATE SUCH A REACTION. MY BEST JUDGMENT, HOWEVER, IS THAT COMMUTATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENTENCE TO MORE MODERATE TERMS ON THE WHOLE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. I DO NOT THINK IT WOULD HAVE ADVERSE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS AS FAR AS THIEU IS CONCERNED.

3. WARMEST REGARDS,

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State Dept. review completed

MORI C05142844

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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